

Message Text

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 01 SAIGON 01465 01 OF 02 061224Z

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ACTION EA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 IO-10 CIAE-00 DODE-00 NSAE-00 NSCE-00

SSO-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 PM-03 H-02 INR-07 L-02 NSC-05

PA-02 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 SAJ-01 SAM-01 OMB-01

NIC-01 CU-04 AID-05 EB-07 COME-00 TRSE-00 /081 W

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O R 061135Z FEB 75

FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2574

INFO AMCONSUL BIEN HOA

AMCONSUL CAN THO

AMCONSUL DANANG

AMCONSUL NHA TRANG

CINCPAC

USDEL JEC PARIS

UNCLAS SECTION 1 OF 2 SAIGON 1465

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

DEPT PASS IMMEDIATE TO IBS/NCA

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT VS

SUBJECT: GVN PRESS CONFERENCE ON PRESS SEIZURES AND
ARREST OF NEWSMEN

1. GVN HELD INTER-MINISTERIAL PRESS CONF AT 0930 HOURS.
PRESIDING WERE: MIN INTERIOR CHAT, NATIONAL POLICE CMDR
BINH, AND ACTING MIN INFO CHAM. AN OVERFLOW CROWD ATTENDED;
MOSTLY VIETNAMESE AND FEW WESTERN JOURNALISTS. CBS COVERED
ENTIRE CONF.

2. PRESS CONF BEGAN WITH MIN INTERIOR READING A PREPARED
TEXT ON THE DISBANDING OF THE HOA HAO PRIVATE GUARDS. GEN BINH
FOLLOWED WITH A PREPARED TEXT ON THE ARREST OF COMMUNIST
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PAGE 02 SAIGON 01465 01 OF 02 061224Z

AGENTS INFILTRATING THE PRESS (SEPTEL).

3. GEN BINH THEN INTRODUCED A MEMBER OF HIS STAFF WHO PRESENTED CAPTURED COMMUNIST DOCUMENTS THAT CLEARLY OUTLINED HANOI'S INTENTION TO INFILTRATE SVN'S PRESS CIRCLES. CHARTS WERE USED TO SHOW HOW ALL DIRECTION CAME FROM THE POLITBURO IN HANOI, AND OTHER CHARTS MADE REFERENCE TO A COSVN PLAN OF ACTION THAT WAS ALSO CAPTURED BY THE GVN. ACCORDING TO BRIEFER, DOCUMENTS WERE AUTHENTIC AND CALLED FOR POLITICAL ACTION WITHIN THE PRESS TO SOW DISSENSION AMONG THE PEOPLE OF SVN, ESPECIALLY THE STUDENTS AND RANK AND FILE WORKERS.

4. TWO WITNESSES WERE THEN INTRODUCED. THE FIRST SAID HE WAS A COMMUNIST CADRE "SECRETARY" FOR THE SAIGON/GIA DINH AREA. HE SAID HE HAD CLEAR AND SPECIFIC ORDERS TO INFILTRATE SAIGON PRESS IN ORDER TO TOPPLE THE GVN. HIS GROUP HAD DETAILED PLANS TO CHOOSE A FEW PAPERS AND INFILTRATE THEM FOR PURPOSE OF OVERTLY CALLING FOR OVERTHROW OF GVN. HE SAID COMMUNISTS HAD SET UP A CMTE TO STUDY PRESS IN ORDER FIND BEST WAY TO INFILTRATE. HE SAID COMMUNISTS WERE ALSO VERY ACTIVE IN INFILTRATING POLICE, LABOR FORCE AND UNIVERSITY STUDENT GROUPS. HIS BASIC TASK WAS TO CREATE AN ADVANTAGEOUS POSITION FOR THE COMMUNISTS. TOWARD THIS END HE CAMPAIGNED FOR THE REPEAL OF PRESS LAW 007 AND SLANDERED GVN SO THAT US WOULD NOT CONTINUE PROVIDING FOREIGN AID. HE DESCRIBED THIS AS PART OF NVN'S PLAN TO SUBJUGATE GVN BY MOVING POLITICALLY TOWARD A COALITION GOVT.

5. SECOND WITNESS SAID HE WAS 25 YEARS OLD AND WAS A COMMUNIST CADRE WITH SPECIFIC INSTRUCTIONS TO INFILTRATE PRESS. FOR THE LAST COUPLE OF YEARS HE WORKED AS A REPORTER FOR DIEN TIN WITH PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY OF WRITING DEROGATORY ARTICLES ABOUT GVN IN THE FIELDS OF ECONOMICS AND SOCIAL WELFARE. HIS MODUS OPERANDI WAS TO USE DISTORTION AND PROPAGANDA TO DESTROY MORALE OF THE PEOPLE AND THE MILITARY. HE REPORTED THAT HE DELIBERATELY DISTORTED ECONOMIC NEWS IN ORDER TO INFLUENCE THE WORKING CLASS. HE SAID THERE WERE MANY CADRES WHO WERE MORE "IMPORTANT" THAN HIMSELF WHO WERE ALSO CHARGED WITH INFILTRATING THE PRESS.

UNCLASSIFIED

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PAGE 03 SAIGON 01465 01 OF 02 061224Z

YM IN QUESTION AND ANSWER PERIOD, FR. THANH LANG, CHRMN OF THE VN PEN CLUB, STATED THAT THESE "LIVE WITNESSES" THAT HAD JUST TESTIFIED DID NOT MANAGE THE NEWSPAPERS; THEREFORE, WHY WERE THE PAPERS SHUT DOWN?

7. MIN CHAM EXPLAINED THAT EDITORS AND PUBLISHERS MUST ACCEPT AND BEAR THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR ACTIONS OF THEIR STAFF, ESPECIALLY SINCE WHATEVER THEY PREPARED WAS AT SOME POINT

CLEARED FOR PUBLICATION AND ACTUALLY PRINTED.

8. ANOTHER QUESTIONER ARGUED THAT IT DIDN'T MAKE SENSE TO PUNISH THE OWNERS OF THE NEWSPAPERS FOR WHAT COMMUNIST CADRE HAD DONE, SINCE THERE WAS NO WAY OWNERS COULD KNOW THAT AN EMPLOYEE OF THE PAPER WAS IN FACT A COMMUNIST. HE ALSO SAID THAT MIN INFO DID NOT HAVE AUTHORITY TO SUSPEND PAPERS' LICENSES TO OPERATE.

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PAGE 01 SAIGON 01465 02 OF 02 061231Z

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UNCLAS SECTION 2 OF 2 SAIGON 1465

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

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9. MIN CHAM REPEATED HIS EARLIER STATEMENT AND SAID THAT, SINCE HIS MINISTRY ISSUED PERMIT IN FIRST PLACE, IT CERTAINLY HAD THE RIGHT TO REVOKE IT IN THE EVENT CERTAIN CONDITIONS WERE NOT MET.

10. A QUESTIONER WHO IDENTIFIED HERSELF AS MANAGER OF DONG PHUONG DAILY (ONE OF THOSE PAPERS WHOSE LICENSE REVOKED) ASKED WHY ONLY CERTAIN NEWSPAPERS WERE CLOSED. SHE SAID AMONG ALLEGED COMMUNIST CADRES THAT WERE ARRESTED, SOME WORKED FOR DAI DAN TOC, BUT ITS LICENSE WAS NOT SUSPENDED.

11. MIN CHAM ANSWERED THAT DEGREE OF RESPONSIBILITY WAS JUDGED TO VARY FROM CASE TO CASE AND THEREFORE APPLICATION UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 02 SAIGON 01465 02 OF 02 061231Z

OF LAW ALSO VARIED.

12. ANOTHER QUESTIONER OBJECTED TO A REMARK MADE BY MIN CHAM MO EFFECT THAT PRESS HAD PROTECTED OR TRIED TO PROTECT COMMUNIST CADRE IN ITS RANKS. HE SAID THEY DID NOT KNOW THEY HAD BEEN INFILTRATED; THEREFORE, HOW COULD THEY BE GUILTY OF PROTECTING COMMUNISTS.

13. MIN CHAM RESTATED HIS MINISTRY'S POSITION; OWNERS OF THE PAPERS HAD TO BEAR THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR MATERIAL THEY PUBLISHED.

14. ANOTHER NEWSMAN STATED COMMUNIST CADRE HAD BEEN EXPOSED AND ARRESTED IN THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY AND IN THE PRESIDENT'S PALACE ITSELF YET THOSE INSTITUTIONS WERE NOT CLOSED DOWN. HE ALSO ARGUED THAT IF THE GVN ITSELF DOES NOT KNOW OR DID NOT KNOW THAT THERE WERE COMMUNISTS IN THEIR MIDST, HOW COULD THE PRESS BE EXPECTED MO KNOW.

15. GEN BINH EXPLAINED THAT THE GVN DOES HAVE A GOOD INTELLIGENCE SYSTEM AND INFO ON NUMEROUS COMMUNIST CADRE, BUT SINCE IT IS OBLIGED BY LAW TO PROTECT THE RIGHTS OF THESE INDIVIDUALS IT IS VERY CAREFUL NOT TO ARREST PEOPLE JUST BECAUSE THEY ARE SUSPECTED OF BEING COMMUNISTS. NO ONE, ACCORDING TO GEN BINH, WAS ARRESTED UNTIL ADEQUATE EVIDENCE WAS AVAILABLE. BINH GAVE A SIMILAR ANSWER TO ANOTHER QUESTION ABOUT WHY THE GVN HAD WAITED UNTIL NOW TO MOVE AGAINST PEOPLE IT HAD ALREADY IDENTIFIED AS COMMUNISTS.

16. SIMILAR QUESTION DEALT WITH WHETHER OR NOT THE ARREST OF THE COMMUNIST CADRE WAS IN ANY WAY RELATED TO THE FACT THAT A NUMBER OF NEWSPAPERS HAVE PRINTED RECENT "POLITICAL INDICTMENT" ISSUED BY OPPOSITION GROUPS.

17. MIN CHAM EMPHATICALLY DENIED ANY CONNECTION BETWEEN THE TWO INCIDENTS. HE SAID PAPERS WERE CONFISCATED BECAUSE THEY VIOLATED THE PRESS STATUTES. THE COMMUNIST CADRE THAT WERE ARRESTED AND THE REVOCATION OF PERMITS WAS AN ENTIRELY SEPARATE ACTION.

18. ASKED ABOUT THE CURRENT STATUS AND TREATMENT OF ARRESTED
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PAGE 03 SAIGON 01465 02 OF 02 061231Z

AGENTS, GEN BINH SAID THEY ARE BEING TEMPORARILY DETAINED AS
IS COMMON AND USUAL PROCEDURE OF LEGAL GOVTS. GEN BINH OFFERED
HIS ASSURANCES THAT THE PRISONERS WERE NOT TORTURED. HE
WENT ON TO SAY THAT SINCE INVESTIGATION WAS IN PROCESS, IT WAS
TOO EARLY TO COMMENT FURTHER.

19. ASKED BY ANOTHER WESTERN JOURNALIST IF THE NATIONAL POLICE
HAD RECEIVED ANY HELP FROM THE AMERICAN CIA, GEN BINH SAID
THAT HIS POLICE NORMALLY COOPERATE WITH THE CIA JUST AS IT
COOPERATES WITH THE INTELLIGENCE COMMUNITIES OF OTHER FRIENDLY
NATIONS, BECAUSE COMMUNIST ACTIVITIES IN SE ASIA ARE NOT
RESTRICTED TO JUST VIETNAM. SINCE THE NORTH VIETNAMESE
COMMUNIST EFFORT WAS PART OF A WORLDWIDE OPERATION, THIS
SORT OF COOPERATION WAS NECESSARY.

20. COMMENT: THE MTG WAS A SERIOUS ONE, AND AUDIENCE APPEARED
TO BE TREATING FORMER COMMUNISTS AS CREDIBLE WITNESSES. NO
QUESTIONS DIRECTED AT GVN STATEMENT THAT INDIVIDUALS ARRESTED
WERE COMMUNIST CADRE. GVN APPEARS TO HAVE MADE GOOD PRESEN-
TATION OF ITS CASE. WHILE SIMULTANEOUS TRANSLATION SUPPLIED,
IT WAS NOT AVAILABLE TO ALL MEMBERS OF AUDIENCE WHICH MAY
LEAD TO SOME DISTORTIONS IN REPORTING.
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Message Attributes

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